October, after which there is a falling off in breeding activity through November to December.

An interesting ecological relationship between the two Wood-swallows, the Dusky (*Artamus cyanopterus*) and the Black-faced (*A. cinereus*) was observed in the Gorge. The hillslopes for about a half mile into the gorge have been cleared for pasture, and the Black-faced Wood-Swallow has penetrated into this area to breed. A hundred yards farther on, in the open Wandoo forest, the Dusky Wood-Swallow was found in numbers, a nest in a hollow tree being noted on October 3. Thus although nests of both species were found within one hundred yards, each species remained in its chosen habitat.

The Little Eagle has seldom been observed on the Swan coastal plain. A pair nested about two miles from the foothills near the Armadale-Fremantle road in a giant Marri, and has used the nest three times in four years, on the other occasion moving to a lower Marri a hundred yards away.

In the gorge itself the Red-eared Firetail has staged a remarkable comeback. In 1958, one nest was found, and only one party of birds was observed. In 1959, four nests were found and in 1960, about two dozen occupied nests were discovered. In 1961, the Gorge was closed to entry, so no observations were made.

A VISIT TO THE SALT MARSH NORTH OF CARNARVON

By T. C. SCOTT, Crawley.

A striking geographical feature on maps of mid-western Australia is the large expanse of salt lake north of Sharks Bay and about 70 miles north of Carnarvon. The lake is approximately 90 miles long and 30 miles at the widest stretch. It appears that this area has not been visited often though it offers quite an interesting scope for the naturalist.

The lake is given the rather indefinite name of "Salt Lake" on most maps though locally it is known as the "Salt Marsh."

In November-December 1961 I was working around the Marsh for a period of five weeks and paid some attention to its natural history. Its most startling characteristic, on first view, is the brilliant, glistening white expanse of salt crystals. On my visit the lake was only partly filled with very saline water. I walked out about one mile, on a narrower part of the Marsh, through soft mud and salt crust and estimated the depth of water to be no more than 5 or 6 feet. The lake has no outlet to the sea. The local people claim that its level rises and falls with the tide on the adjoining coast, but during my stay I failed to notice any such movement.

The water was so highly saline that dead bushes which had been blown into the water were so heavily encrusted with salt they looked like icebergs. Branches lying on the edge were caked with as much

as half-an-inch of salt crystals. No aquatic fauna was seen living, but thousands of small dead Spangled Perch *(Therapon unicolor)* were found desiccated above the water line on both western and eastern shorelines. Evidently they had been killed by the rising salt concentration of the lake, which must have been somewhat fresher at previous seasons. The species would periodically enter the lake, when conditions were suitable, from the Lyndon and Minilya Rivers which debouch into it. Brine shrimps *(Artemia* and *Parartemia)* and the gastropod *Coxiella,* so characteristic of most salt lake systems in Western Australia, were absent. Sub-fossil marine mollusca were plentiful on the lake margin some distance inland from the present western shoreline.

The flats around the Marsh are well-grassed and vegetated with various chenopods, such as "roly poly" *(Salsola kali),* and Trichiniums. The most conspicuous forms of life on these flats are birds, such as Zebra Finches *(Taeniopygia castanotis),* Samphire Thornbills *(Acanthiza iredalei).* Pipits *(Anthus novae-zealandiae),* Blue-and-white Wrens *(Malurus leuconotus)* and Brown Song-Larks *(Cinclorhamphus cruralis).* Along the margins of the lake are found occasional Red-capped Dotterel *(Charadrius alexandrinus).* The absence of other water-birds on the lake was noteworthy.

To the west beyond the Marsh flats extended about 15 miles of very interesting sandplain with steep red sandhills, similar to the country around Sharks Bay and slightly reminiscent of the sandplain remnants at Wiluna. The vegetation consisted of a dwarf eucalypt, Banksias and other Proteaceae, spinifex *(Triodia)* and bogota *(Acacia linophylla).* This type of country becomes more open towards the coast and there are occasional clumps of figs *(Ficus platypoda)* on the travertine. On the east side of the Marsh occurs typical Murchison country, consisting of sclerophyllous Acacias with river gums *(Eucalyptus camaldulensis)* along the rivers.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Lesser Noddy at Perth.—On July 25, 1959, I saw a single bird on Langley Park reserve, Perth, which I identified as either a Common Noddy or a Lesser Noddy. Recently I ascertained that D. L. Serventy and V. N. Serventy recorded an irruption of the Lesser Noddy *(Anous tenuirostris)* on beaches in the Fremantle and Bunbury areas on July 24, 1959. Therefore the bird I saw was almost certainly of this species.

—A. A. BURBIDGE, Mandurah

Gull-billed Tern at Hamelin Bay.—On January 4, 1962, a single Gull-billed Tern *(Gelochelidon nilotica)* was observed over a small lake just to the east of the Hamelin Bay settlement. The bird was traversing the lake and dipping occasionally as though feeding.

This observation was made outside the area in which the species has been commonly recorded (see J. R. Ford, *W.A. Nat.,* 6: 197 and 7: 208), and is, therefore, placed on record.

E. H. and L. E. SEDGWICK, Collie.